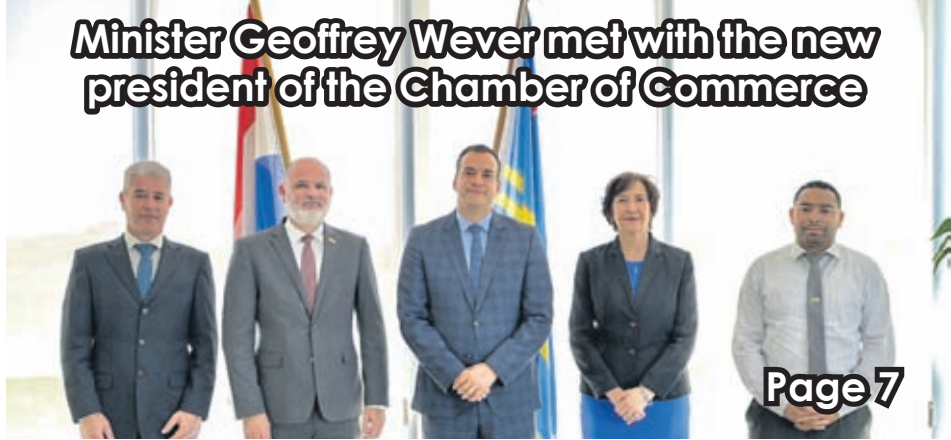




Minister Ursell Arends attends the Our Ocean Conference in Panama

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Minister Geoffrey Wever met with the new president of the Chamber of Commerce

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A photograph of a burger with a yellow bun, cheese, and lettuce, served next to a basket of golden fries on a checkered tablecloth.

Page 8

Abortion clinics crossing state borders not always welcome

BRISTOL, Va. (AP) — The pastors smiled as they held the doors open, grabbing the hands of those who walked by and urging many to keep praying and to keep showing up. Some responded with a hug. A few grimaced as they squeezed past. Shelley Koch, a longtime resident of southwest Virginia, had witnessed a similar scene many Sunday mornings after church services. On this day, however, it played out in a parking lot outside a modest government building in Bristol where officials had just advanced a proposal that threatens to tear apart the very fabric of her community. For months, residents of the town have battled over whether clinics limited by strict anti-abortion laws in neighboring Tennessee, Kentucky and West Virginia should be allowed to continue to hop over the border and operate there.

Continued on Page 3



Brass markers, marking the state line between Bristol, Tenn. and Bristol, Va., line State Street in Bristol, Va., on Thursday, Feb. 23, 2023. Associated Press

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TUESDAY
JEAN PAUL
SAXOPHONIST
6:30pm - 8:30pm

WEDNESDAY
EDDIE KROON
SINGER
6:30pm - 8:30pm

THURSDAY
MARRYBELL MADURO
SINGER
6:30pm - 8:30pm

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U.S. to focus bison restoration on expanding tribal herds



Bison awaiting transfer to Native American tribes walk in a herd inside a corral at Badlands National Park, on Oct. 13, 2022, near Wall, S.D.

Associated Press

By **MATTHEW BROWN**

Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — U.S. officials will work to restore more large bison herds to Native American lands under a Friday order from Interior Secretary Deb Haaland that calls for the government to tap into Indigenous knowledge in its efforts to conserve the burly animals that are an icon of the American West.

Haaland also announced \$25 million in federal spending for bison conservation. The money, from last year's climate bill, will build new herds, transfer more bison from federal to tribal lands and forge new bison management agreements with tribes, officials said.

American bison, also known as buffalo, have bounced back from their near extinction due to commercial hunting in the 1800s. But they remain absent from most of the grasslands they once occupied, and many tribes have struggled to restore their deep historical connections to the animals. As many as 60 million bi-

son once roamed North America, moving in vast herds that were central to the culture and survival of numerous Native American groups.

They were driven to the brink of extinction more than a century ago when hunters, U.S. troops and tourists shot them by the thousands to feed a growing commercial market that used bison parts in machinery, fertilizer and clothing. By 1889, only a few hundred bison remained.

Haaland, of Laguna Pueblo in New Mexico, is the first Native American to serve as a U.S. Cabinet secretary. She's championed tribal concerns on issues ranging from wildlife conservation to energy development, and put a spotlight on past mistreatment of Native Americans through a series of listening sessions about systemic abuses at government-run boarding schools. She told The Associated Press in an interview last year that the decimation of bison by European settlers eliminated the prima-

ry food source for many tribes and opened the way for their land to be taken away.

The return of bison in some locations is considered a conservation success. But Haaland said they remain "functionally extinct" and more work is needed to return the animals to tribal lands and restore the grasslands they depend on.

"This holistic effort will ensure that this powerful sacred animal is reconnected to its natural habitat and the original stewards who know best how to care for it," Haaland said in announcing her order Friday, during a World Wildlife Day event at the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C..

"When we think about Indigenous communities, we must acknowledge that they have spent generations over many centuries observing the seasons, tracking wildlife migration patterns and fully comprehending our role in the delicate balance of this earth," she added.

Across the U.S., from New York to Oklahoma to Alaska, 82 tribes now have more than 20,000 bison in 65 herds. Numbers have been growing in recent years along with the desire among Native Americans to reclaim stewardship of the animals.

Many of the tribes' bison came from U.S. agencies, which over the past two decades transferred thousands of the animals to thin government-controlled herds so they don't outgrow the land. The transfers often were carried out in cooperation with the South Dakota-based InterTribal Buffalo Council. The group's director, Troy Heinert, said Haaland's order is an acknowledgement of the work tribes have already done.

"The buffalo has just as long a connection to Indigenous people as we have to it," said Heinert, a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. "They are not just a number or a commodity; this is returning a relative to its rightful place."

Past administrations have proposed or advanced bison conservation plans — including under former Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump — and tribes have long been part of that process.

Haaland's order puts Native American interests at the center of the Interior Department's bison program. It also adds a tribal leader, yet to be named, to a group that's exploring establishing new herds on both tribal and federal lands. Bison reintroductions could put the Biden administration at odds with state officials in Montana. Republican lawmakers have resisted returning the animals to federal lands and opposed some previous bison transfers to tribes.

State lawmakers voted Thursday to advance a resolution opposing the reintroduction of bison to the million-acre (400,000-hectare) Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge in northern Montana — an idea that's been floated by the Biden administration and has support among Native Americans.

"Bison were part of the culture 200, 300 years ago. We aren't going back to that," said Montana state Sen. Mike Lang, who sponsored the resolution. Lang said he doesn't oppose bison on tribal lands but added that as populations grow they can cause problems for ranchers and present a public safety threat.

About half of the \$25 million announced Friday will go to the National Park Service. The remainder will be split among the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Land Management and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

It includes about \$1 million to establish an apprenticeship program that will provide training to tribes on managing bison, including at national parks and national wildlife refuges, officials said.

The Interior Department currently oversees 11,000 bison in herds on public lands in 12 states. □

Abortion clinics crossing state borders not always welcome

Continued from Front

The proposal on the table, submitted by anti-abortion activists, was that they shouldn't. The local pastors were on hand to spread that message.

"We're trying to figure out what we do at this point," said Koch, who supports abortion rights. "We're just on our heels all the time."

The conflict is not unique to this border community, which boasts a spot where a person can stand in Virginia and Tennessee at the same time. Similar disputes have broken out across the country following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to overturn the landmark 1973 decision establishing a constitutional right to abortion.

As clinics have been forced to shutter in Republican-dominant states with strict abortion bans, some have relocated to cities and towns just over the border, in states with more liberal laws. The goal is to help women avoid traveling long distances. Yet that effort does not always go smoothly:

The politics of border towns and cities don't always align with those in their state capitals. They can be more socially conservative, with residents who object to abortion on moral grounds.

Anti-abortion activists have tapped into that sentiment — in Virginia and



A temporary sign hangs on the outside of the Bristol Women's Health Clinic on Thursday, Feb. 23, 2023 in Bristol, Va.

elsewhere — and are proposing changes to zoning laws to stop the clinics from moving in. Since Roe was overturned, such local ordinances have been identified as a tool for officials to control where patients can get an abortion, advocates and legal experts say.

In Texas, even before Roe was overturned, more than 40 towns prohibited abortion services inside their city limits. That trend, led by anti-abortion activist Mark Lee Dickson, has since successfully spread to politically conservative towns in Iowa, Louisiana, New Mexico, Nebraska and Ohio.

Under Roe, the high court had ruled that it was unconstitutional for state or local lawmakers to create any "substantial obstacle" to a patient seeking an abortion. That rule no longer exists.

While such zoning changes are no longer necessary in Texas, which now has one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the country, Dickson says he and others will continue to pursue them in other states with liberal abortion statutes.

"We're going to keep on going forward and do everything that we can to protect life," he said.

In New Mexico, which has

one of the country's most liberal abortion access laws, activists in two counties and three cities in the eastern part of the state have successfully sought zoning changes restricting the procedure. Democratic officials have since proposed legislation to ban them from interfering with abortion access.

In the college town of Carbondale, Illinois, a state where abortion remains widely accessible, anti-abortion activists have asked zoning officials to block future clinics from opening after two already operate in town. Thus far, they've been unsuccessful.

Meanwhile, some of the states that have severely restricted abortion access are trying to make it harder for residents to end their pregnancies elsewhere. Employees at the University of Idaho who refer students to a clinic just 8 miles (13 kilometers) away in the liberal-leaning state of Washington could face felony charges under a recently passed state law.

Perhaps no other place so neatly encapsulates the issue as the twin cities of Bristol, Virginia, and Bristol, Tennessee. Before Roe, an abortion clinic had operated for decades in Bristol, Tennessee. After Roe, which triggered the Volunteer State's strict abortion law, the clinic hopped over the state line into Bristol, Virginia.

That's when anti-abortion advocates began pushing back. At the request of some concerned citizens, the socially conservative, faith-based Family Foundation of Virginia helped draft an amendment to the city's zoning code that says, apart from where the existing clinic sits, land can't be used to end a "pre-born human life."

"Nobody wants their town to be known as the place where people come to take human life. That's just not a reputation that the people in Bristol want for their area," said foundation President Victoria Cobb. □

Associated Press

Doctor: Lesion removed from Biden's chest was cancerous

By ZEKE MILLER

AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — A skin lesion removed from President Joe Biden's chest last month was a basal cell carcinoma — a common form of skin cancer — his doctor said Friday, adding that no further treatment was required.

Dr. Kevin O'Connor, the White House doctor who has served as Biden's long-time physician, said "all cancerous tissue was suc-

cessfully removed" during the president's routine physical on Feb. 16. Biden, 80, was deemed by O'Connor to be "healthy, vigorous" and "fit" to handle his White House responsibilities during that physical exam, which comes as he is weeks away from launching an expected bid for reelection in 2024.

O'Connor said the site of the removal on Biden's chest has "healed nicely" and the president will continue regular skin screen-

ings as part of his routine health plan.

Basal cells are among the most common and easily treated forms of cancer — especially when caught early. O'Connor said they don't tend to spread like other cancers, but could grow in size, which is why they are removed.

Biden had "several localized non-melanoma skin cancers" removed from his body before he started his presidency, O'Connor said in his Feb. 16 summary of



President Joe Biden arrives at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Thursday, Feb. 16, 2023.

Associated Press

the president's health, noting it was well established that Biden spent a lot of

time in the sun during his youth. □

Nevada crash is 3rd fatal one tied to air medical service

The company that owns the medical transport aircraft that crashed in northern Nevada last week, killing all five people aboard, has been tied to two other fatal crashes in the last four years.

A review of records shows that with the latest crash, 11 people total have now died on planes owned and operated by Guardian Flight, the Reno Gazette-Journal reported Friday.

The company is also now facing its fourth National Transportation Safety Board probe since 2018, said Bruce Landsberg, NTSB vice chairman.

A single-engine Pilatus PC12 was heading from Reno to Salt Lake City on Feb. 24 when investigators say it broke apart. It plummeted to the ground near rural Stagecoach, 40 miles (64 kilometers) southeast of Reno. The dead included pilot, Scott Walton, 46, and two medical crew members, Edward Pricola, 32, and Ryan Watson, 27. The patient was Mark Rand, 69. His wife, Terri Rand, 66, had been accompanying him. Sarah Sulick, a spokesperson for the National Transportation Safety Board, said Thursday a seven-member team sent to Nevada over the weekend to investigate the crash was wrapping up the on-site portion of their



This photo provided by The National Transportation Safety Board shows NTSB investigators on Sunday, Feb. 26, 2023, at the crash site in Dayton, Nev., documenting the wreckage of a Pilatus PC-12 airplane a medical air transport flight operated by Guardian Flight that crashed on Friday, Feb. 24, while enroute from Reno, Nevada, to Salt Lake City.

Associated Press

investigation. She said the team recovered electronic navigation equipment from the plane at the crash site and has sent it to the agency's headquarters in Washington, D.C., for analysis. A preliminary report outlining the agency's initial findings will be released "in the next week or so," Sulick said, while a final report containing the crash's probable cause is expected within

the next two years. The flight was a Care Flight, which is a service of REMSA Health. Care Flight's aviation vendor is Guardian Flight. REMSA has grounded its Care Flights for now. Jena Esposito, KPS3 PR manager and a spokesperson for REMSA, declined comment and deferred inquiries to Guardian Flight, which did not immediately reply to a request for com-

ment. Guardian Flight has more than 60 aircraft flying out of 60 locations, including Hawaii and Alaska. In December, a Hawaii Life Flight medical transport crew was en route to get a patient when they crashed into the ocean off Maui. Investigators found the bodies of the three crew members and wreckage a month later. The cause is

still under investigation. In January 2019, a medical transport aircraft crashed outside Juneau, Alaska. A pilot, nurse and paramedic on their way to get transport a patient were killed. The bodies of the crew have yet to be found. After a nearly two-year investigation, the NTSB could not determine the cause. A 2018 crash in Arizona did not result in any fatalities. Authorities say it was caused by autopilot error and pilot overcorrection. An aviation attorney representing relatives of the Rands, who died in the Feb. 24 crash, told the AP that the tragedy was "absolutely preventable." "It really starts with the decision to go in the first place, which never should have been made," said Dan Rose, a former Navy pilot who has been litigating aviation cases for 25 years. Rose said he is looking forward to NTSB's preliminary report, which he hopes will provide more details about the overall conditions at the time of the nighttime crash, which occurred amid a winter storm. He declined to say what condition Mark Rand suffered from. But it wasn't "life critical," and he had been dealing with it for several months before the crash. □

Maine lobstermen have slower year amid industry challenges



Max Oliver moves a lobster to the banding table aboard his boat while fishing off Spruce Head, Maine, on Aug. 31, 2021.

Associated Press

By PATRICK WHITTLE
Associated Press

ROCKPORT, Maine (AP) — Fishers of Maine lobster, one of the most lucrative

seafood species in the U.S., had a smaller haul during a year in which the industry battled surging fuel and bait prices, rebukes from

key retailers and the looming possibility of new fishing restrictions. Maine lobster has exploded in value in recent years in part due to growing international demand from countries such as China. The industry brought about 98 million pounds of lobster to the docks worth about \$389 million in 2022, Maine regulators said Friday. That was more than 11% less than the previous year, in which they harvested more than 110 million pounds of lobster worth more than \$740 million. The value of lobsters also fell to a little less than \$4 per pound at the docks, the lowest since 2017, a

year after setting a record of more than \$6.70 in 2021. The industry has experienced growth in recent years, as fishermen have caught more than 96 million pounds of lobster per year for 13 years in a row after never previously reaching that mark. But it is also wrangling with threats such as proposed rules to protect rare North Atlantic right whales, which are vulnerable to entanglement in gear. Last year was a "real steady season," for the most part, but the high price of doing business and a diminished price per pound for lobsters were challenges, said John Tripp, a fisherman from St.

George. "It's getting pretty costly to do what we do," Tripp said. The lower price to fishermen last year did not necessarily translate to lower prices for consumers, as lobsters remain a premium seafood product. Fishermen are typically paid \$4 to \$5 per pound for their catch, while retailers often charge consumers more than twice that. The potential threats to the industry include the warming of the Gulf of Maine, which is a key fishing area off New England. The gulf experienced its second-warmest year on record last year, scientists have said. □

Army blocks Israeli rally supporting torched West Bank town

Associated Press

HAWARA, West Bank (AP)

— Israeli troops fired stun grenades and tear gas on Friday to block busloads of Israeli left-wing activists from staging a solidarity rally in a Palestinian town that was set ablaze by radical Jewish settlers earlier this week, protesters said.

The soldiers shoved protesters to the ground in the occupied West Bank town of Hawara, activists said, pressing their knees into their necks and backs before briefly detaining them. According to Sally Abed from the group Standing Together, at least two protesters were briefly arrested. The army threw them to the ground, kicking and handcuffing them, she said.

In another case, a group of soldiers violently pushed former Israeli parliament speaker, Avraham Burg, until he stumbled to the ground.

The Israeli army said it had decided to declare Hawara a closed military zone because of the soaring tensions following Sunday's settler-led attack. When Israeli and Palestinian activists attempted to violate the military order, security



Israeli border police officers block hundreds of Israeli left-wing activists from staging a solidarity rally in the Palestinian town that was set ablaze by radical Jewish settlers earlier this week, next to the West Bank town of Hawara, Friday, March 3, 2023.

forces used tear gas and other means to disperse the crowds and maintain order, the military said.

Spokesperson Lt. Col. Richard Hecht said that the military would pursue "a de-escalation policy in the region" after "this complex and tragic week for all sides." He did not elaborate.

Hundreds of settlers, some armed with knives and guns, rampaged through Hawara on Sunday and torched dozens of homes and businesses after two Israeli brothers were shot and killed nearby. One Palestinian was killed in the mob assault.

"It is ridiculous that the army allows settlers to enter Ha-

wara as we speak, but we — Israeli Jews and Arabs who wish to show our solidarity — are told that there is no entry," Standing Together said. The group said the rally was coordinated with the local council and residents.

On Friday, some 500 people holding signs of solidarity and Palestinian flags

— mostly older men and women, both Jews and Arab citizens — stepped off buses that were stopped by Israeli soldiers and headed down the highway toward Hawara.

Palestinian motorists honked in support. The protesters chanted, "No to occupation" and "End Jewish terror." Facing the mass of police and troops deployed to halt their peaceful protest, they shouted, "Where were you when Hawara happened?" — referring to the intense rampage that went largely unchecked and unpunished. Unlike Palestinian cities like Ramallah that are under the control of the Palestinian Authority, Hawara is mostly under Israeli security control. The Israeli army has said that the ferocity and scope of the settler mobs earlier this week caught them by surprise. The Defense Ministry has sent two suspected ringleaders of the violence to administrative detention.

A town of 7,000 Palestinians surrounded by ideological settlements, Hawara long been a flashpoint for violence between Israelis and Palestinians. □

Associated Press

Residents of Japan seek compensation from N. Korea for abuses

By MARI YAMAGUCHI

Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — A group of residents of Japan who say they suffered decades of human rights abuses in North Korea after being lured there by false promises of a "Paradise on Earth" asked a Japanese appeals court on Friday to rule that the North should pay them compensation.

The five plaintiffs, including ethnic Koreans and Japanese, moved to North Korea under a 1959-1984 program in which the North promised free health care, education, jobs and other benefits. But they said none was available and they were mostly assigned manual work at mines, forests or farms.

The plaintiffs filed a lawsuit in 2018 with Tokyo District Court seeking 100 million

yen (\$900,000) each in compensation for "illegal solicitation and detainment." The court acknowledged that the plaintiffs had moved to North Korea because of false information that was provided by the North and a pro-North Korean organization in Japan, Chongryon. But it ruled in March 2022 that the statute of limitations had expired and that Japanese courts do not have jurisdiction because the plaintiffs' suffering took place outside Japan.

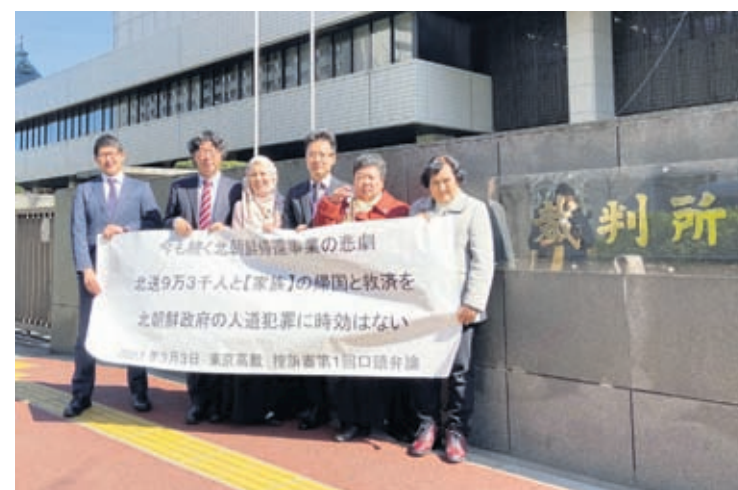
In their appeal to the Tokyo High Court on Friday, lawyers for the plaintiffs argued that Japan has jurisdiction because their ordeal began when they boarded ships in a Japanese port, lawyer Kenji Fukuda said. Only two of the original plaintiffs participated be-

cause others are sick or have died. A ruling is expected in May.

One plaintiff, Eiko Kawasaki, now 80, was 17 when she took a ship to North Korea in 1960 and was stuck there until she was able to flee back to Japan in 2003, leaving behind her grown children.

About half a million ethnic Koreans currently live in Japan and face discrimination in school, at work and in their daily lives. Many are descendants of Koreans who came to Japan, many forcibly, to work in mines and factories during Japan's colonization of the Korean Peninsula — a past that still strains relations between Japan and the Koreas.

In 1959, North Korea began a resettlement program to bring overseas Koreans to



Two of five plaintiffs, Hiroko Saito, far right, and Eiko Kawasaki, second from right, their lawyers and supporters stand outside of the Tokyo High Court, Friday, March 3, 2023, after their first hearing in the appeals trial demanding North Korea pay damages over the 1959-1984 repatriation program which they say was illegal solicitation and detainment.

Associated Press

the North to make up for workers killed during the Korean War. The Japanese government, viewing ethnic Koreans as outsiders, welcomed the program

and helped arrange for people to travel to North Korea. About 93,000 ethnic Korean residents of Japan and their family members moved to the North. □

Mexico hopes to avoid sanctions on vaquita's near extinction

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico is seeking to avoid potential trade sanctions this week for failing to stop the near-extinction of the vaquita, the world's smallest porpoise and most endangered marine mammal. Studies estimate there may be as few as eight vaquitas remaining in the Gulf of California, the only place they exist and where they often become entangled in illegal gill nets and drown. The government submitted a protection plan this week to the international wildlife body known as CITES, which had rejected an earlier version. It lists establishing "alternative fishing techniques" to gillnet fishing as one its top priorities. In reality, the government's protection efforts have been uneven. The administration of President Andrés Manuel López has largely refused to spend money to compensate fishermen for staying out of the vaquita refuge and to stop using gill nets. The nets are set illegally to catch totoaba, a fish whose swim bladders are a delicacy in China worth thousands of dollars per pound. The activist group Sea Shepherd, which has joined the Mexican Navy in patrols to deter the fishermen and to help destroy gill



This undated file photo provided by The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shows a vaquita porpoise.

nets, says the efforts have successfully reduced the gillnet fishing. But the Mexican government has not spent the money needed to train and compensate fishermen for using alternate fishing techniques such as nets or lines that won't trap vaquitas. "What is needed is fewer plans and bureaucracy, and more concrete actions in the vaquita's habitat," said Alex Olivera, the Mexico representative for the Center for Biological Diversity. Olivera noted that CITES, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and

Flora, could recommend trade sanctions if Mexico doesn't take reasonable action. "There is no alternative fishing gear" being offered, said Lorenzo Rojas, a marine biologist who has headed the international committee to save the vaquita. "The fisheries authorities have been notable for their absence," leaving the effort to change practices up to civic groups and fishermen. The Mexican government banned the use of gill nets in the area in 2017, with the understanding it would provide support payments and training on using less dan-

gerous fishing methods. Sea Shepherd has for years posted ships in the Gulf of California to try to discourage the illegal fishing and remove abandoned "ghost nets" that keep trapping vaquitas. Sea Shepherd says its joint efforts with the Mexican Navy — which have sunk about 193 concrete blocks onto the bottom of the Gulf to snag illegal nets in the reserve area — has resulted in a 79% reduction in the amount of time small boats spent illegally fishing in the protected area. It dropped from 449 hours between Oct. 10 and Dec. 5 2021, to 164 hours in the same period of 2022.

But that's still a lot of fishing time spent in an area that's supposed to be totally off-limits. "We have to do better," said Pritam Singh, the Sea Shepherd chairman. A fisheries trade magazine, *Notipisca*, has reported that the Mexican government plans to fund a study examining teeth of vaquitas gathered in the past in hopes of proving they once lived in an estuary habitat fed by the Colorado River containing a mix of salt and freshwater. Little freshwater comes down to the Mexican waters since the United States began building dams on the river the 1930s. According to one theory, the United States — not Mexico — would be responsible for the vaquitas' decline, by cutting off the flow. However, experts note that vaquitas found dead typically have died by drowning in nets, not from malnourishment or other causes. In 2020, the Mexican government publicized efforts to crack down on what it called "The Cartel of the Sea," arresting a fisherman named Sunshine Rodriguez and accusing him of being the leader of an a crime ring that trafficked in totoaba swim bladders. □

Associated Press

Police: Illegal refinery blast in Nigeria kills at least 12



Smoke rise from the site of an illegal refinery explosion in Emuoha council area of the southern Rivers, Nigeria, Friday, March 3, 2023.

Associated Press

By CHINEDU ASADU ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — An explosion and fire near an illegal oil refinery site in Nigeria's Niger Delta region killed at least 12 people Friday, police said, although

local residents reported a much higher death toll. The explosion in Emuoha council area of the southern Rivers state occurred along a pipeline targeted by illegal refinery operators

who were trying to steal oil, state police spokesperson Grace Iringe-Koko said. "Preliminary investigation by the Police Command indicates that the victims were scooping crude products when the site caught fire," Iringe-Koko said. Five vehicles, four auto-rickshaws and a motorcycle "were all burned to ashes," she said, adding that authorities were working to determine how many people died. People in the area told The Associated Press that dozens may have died in the fire that raged for hours and that the victims were mostly young people who planned to siphon oil from a pipeline and to transport

to an illegal refinery site in at least five vehicles. Fyनेface Dumnamene, executive director of Youths and Environmental Advocacy Centre, said a spark from the exhaust pipe of a bus loaded with gallons of crude oil ignited the explosion as the driver attempted to depart. "Everybody in about five vehicles there was all burnt," Dumnamene told the AP. Residents rushed in to try rescue some of those at the scene, but the explosion was "a massive one which shook our buildings," said Is-sac Amaechi, who lives in the area. Illegal refineries are a lucrative business in Nigeria, one of Africa's top oil produc-

ers. They are more rampant in the oil-rich Niger Delta region, where most of the nation's oil facilities are located. The workers at such facilities rarely adhere to safety standards, leading to frequent fires, including one in Imo state last year in which more than 100 people were killed. Nigeria lost at least \$3 billion worth of crude oil to theft between January 2021 and February 2022. Shady business operators often avoid regulators by setting up refineries in remote areas such as the one in Imo, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) said last year. □

Minister Ursell Arends attends the Our Ocean Conference in Panama

(Oranjestad)—The Our Ocean Conference is a space created for dialogue about collaborations between chiefs of states, the private sector, civil society and academic institutions to discuss how to preserve marine resources, promote sustainability and educate the general public about the oceans.

The conferences took place on March 2nd to March 3rd in Panama. The minister of Environment is a participant in the event Blue Leaders, which was organized by Belgium to open the Our Ocean Conference with this year's slogan: "Our Oceans, Our Connection."

The goal of the event was to encourage support for the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ),



which is designed to protect marine life and resources across international waters.

Blue Leaders called for all countries to seal the deal on BBNJ, which is set to be finalized this year. Implementation of the jurisdiction is essential for the preservation of the ocean's health

and productivity, which is vital for maintaining life on earth. The goal is to protect at least 30% of the world's oceans.

As a participant at the event, Minister Ursell Arends presented a promise of Aruba and the Dutch Kingdom to preserve our oceans and protect ma-

rine life. Synergy and ambition for efforts that create resilience for resources and marine biodiversity will benefit communities around the world.

Our Ocean Conference focuses on 6 areas of action to protect and revitalize the oceans, for example areas of marine protections, sustainable Blue Economy, climate change, marine security, sustainable fishing and marine pollution.

The ocean is one of the most valuable resources for humanity. The ocean houses 80% of all life on

earth, provides food for more than 3 billion people on earth and is a medium for global trading. However, the ocean is at risk due to global warming, non-sustainable practices, illegal fishing, imprudent contamination and loss of marine life.

Panama is the first country in Central America to host this event, which has emphasized the importance for contribution by Latin America in marine preservation and world leading related to the oceans in the last few years. □



Minister Geoffrey Wever met with the new president of the Chamber of Commerce



(Oranjestad)—The Chamber of Commerce and Minister Geoffrey Wever of Economic Relations met several times to discuss topics relating to Aruba's economy.

Yesterday, Mr. Gavril Mansure met with Minister Wever for the first time as the new president of the Chamber

of Commerce. The topics discussed included the progress of the UBO registry, which is advancing as planned. Furthermore, the Chamber of Commerce brought forth various points related to the prosecution reform and the introduction of tax at the border.

To finalize, the Chamber

of Commerce and Minister Wever discussed plans for developing the city centers of Oranjestad and San Nicolas.

"It is always a pleasure to interchange ideas with the Chamber of Commerce; they always provide a positive contribution," Minister Wever stated. □

Energy security is an urgent priority to Minister Glenbert Croes

(Oranjestad)—During a press conference held by the government, Minister Glenbert Croes elaborated on the work for recovering the infrastructure of the local refinery, which has been closed for many years now.

One of the aspects that the minister of Energy is putting pressure on is the security for energy, which is something that always concerned the minister as he sees it as urgent and in need of attention. In terms of what he means with "the essential infrastructure for ensuring energy security", the minis-

ter further explained:

"Gasoline supply cannot fail, diesel supply cannot fail. Everything that is important and indispensable for our local economy cannot fail, as well as the infrastructures needed to ensure the importation and distribution of essential combustibles for our economy. So, there needs to be investments to ensure this."

While answering questions from the press related to the refinery, the minister further explained that a closed refinery cannot generate revenue. Minister Croes further

explained that all good parts of the refinery will be reactivated with clean energy and technology. All those that are no longer functional, will be a part of the Aruba Hydrogen Valley. Even though some may think that this is a dream for the future and that this will take a long time to realize, but the minister shared the news that 4 Nordic countries in Europe are investing in Green Hydrogen which is already ready to be distributed this year.

This shows how fast the project for the Aruba Hydrogen Valley could become



a reality, bringing with it a new economic outlet that Aruba needs and creating a second economic pillar that can push the country in the direction of prosper-

ity that our island deserves.

Minister Glenbert Croes took on his task to ensure that Aruba is the first region with a hydrogen valley. □

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Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at Renaissance Ocean Suits



The Aruba Tourism Authority recently recognized the Emerald Ambassadors of Aruba. Presenting the Ambassadors with the Emerald certification as a token of appreciation. The Emerald certification is granted to ambassadors to recognize, the loyalty, friendship, and visits to the island of Aruba. Emerald Honorees has been choosing Aruba as her preferred vacation destination for more than 35 years consecutively.

Honorees were: Emerald Ambassadors 35+ years:
Francis Passenaut resident of New York, United States
Robert Sorsaia resident of New York, United States

Ms. Olga Ruiz representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and members of Renaissance Ocean Suits bestowed the certification of the Emerald Ambassadors. The honorees were presented with the Emerald

Ambassador Certificate and memorable gifts.

On behalf of the Aruba Government, we would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Passenaut and Mr. Sorsaia, both of whom are Carnival enthusiasts. Thank you for making Aruba your favored vacation destination for so many years. We are so honored to have had such wonderful visitors over the years! Aruba is without a doubt your home away from home!

Top reason for returning to Aruba, provided by the honorees were:
Mr. Passenaut & Mr. Sorsaia reasons:

Great people: the locals and the hotel staff
Great national infrastructure
Great water: drinking and recreational
Great beaches
Great safety

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Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at the Caribbean Palm Village



The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure to recognize an Emerald Ambassador of Aruba with an honor certificate. The honor certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki"

to guests whom have visited Aruba for over 35 years consecutively.

Honoree was:
Emerald Ambassador (35+ years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Mrs. Anne Connie Benson

The greatest award we provide is the Emerald Ambassador certificate, which is granted to travelers who have visited Aruba continuously for 35 years or more. The ceremony was significant to us because it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to celebrate guests who had been coming to Aruba for more than 35 years.

Ms. Kimberley Richardson representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and members of the Caribbean Palm Village bestowed the honor certification to the honoree, presented her with gifts, and also thanked her for choosing Aruba as her favorite vaca-

tion destination and as her home-away-from-home.

Top reasons for returning to Aruba, provided by the honoree was:

Mrs. Anne Connie Benson

- Aruba's safety
- The friendliness of the locals
- The timeshare resort she always stayed at – Caribbean Palm Village
- Aruba's year-round sunny weather
- Aruba's nice sandy beaches and picturesque sunsets



Aruba Today is delighted to share to its readers a new segment called "Beauty and the Beach", where we take a minute to honor our guests who have decided to spend their vacation on our beautiful and warm island.

In this edition, we'd like to give a shout out to **Sanderijn and Tom from The Netherlands**, who was seen enjoying Eagle Beach. Aruba is always proud to host all families and guests. We at Aruba Today encourage any visitor of the island to send in their pictures and/or messages; who knows? You might get on the cover!







Aruba's underwater wonderland



ORANJESTAD - Exploring the underwater wonders is something you should definitely do during your stay in Aruba. The underwater world has everything to offer that makes a snorkel trip so exceptional; an impressive, colorful sea life with exotic fishes, turtles and beautiful coral reef. The historic shipwrecks, located on the Aruban seabed are also worth a visit. Aruba is known for its white beaches and blue oceans, which means there are many fascinating under water spots, where you can take your snorkeling gear and we selected the top spots for you.

Tres Trapi

Tres Trapi means tree steps in Papiamentu, Papiamentu is together with Dutch the official language spoken on Aruba. The beach is called Tres Trapi because it is accessible by the tree steps carved into the rocks. Tres Trapi is a small rocky

beach, located on the north-western side of the island, approximately 5 to 10 minute drive from Palm Beach. From the unique steps you can easily walk over the beach into the clear and turquoise blue ocean. While snorkeling you will encounter all kind of tropical fishes and sea stars. The kind of starfish you will find in the Aruban waters is the red cushion sea star. This is a starfish that is commonly found in the shallow waters of the Caribbean sea and if you are lucky during your snorkeling visit to Tres Trapi, you may come across one of the green sea turtles. Respect the animal, keep your distance and enjoy the view. Also remember; it is a once in a life time experience.

Antilla shipwreck

Antilla is a 400-foot-long long ship, built in 1939 in Hamburg, Germany. Antilla came to Aruba, because it

had to find a neutral port. When Germany invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the crew decided to let their own ship sink, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Dutch Navy. Antilla lies on its port-side in Malmok bay, and the sunken world war two ship is now one of Aruba's most popular snorkeling and dive spots. However, the ship wreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the ship wreck alone is already impressive enough.



Baby Beach

Baby beach; a white beach, with a crystal blue ocean. The beach is located on the southern part of the island. On the way to the famous beach, you will drive through the old capital of Aruba, San Nicolas. The old Aruban culture can be still felt and experienced here, so do not hesitate to get out of your car and walk around for a while. Baby beach is a child friendly beach, since it is shallow and the water has a pleasant temperature. The name therefore fits well with the beach. Baby beach is an excellent beach for snorkeling, especially if you want to go with small children, because the water remains shallow and there are still many underwater wonders to see. In the ocean there is an area marked until where it is recommended to snorkel and on the beach you will find different facilities. It is a per-

fect beach to spend your day snorkeling and relaxing.

Mangel Halto

Mangel Halto beach is located in Savaneta, on the southern-west part of the island. The beach is different from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. You reach the beach by a bridge through the mangroves and then you will have several entrances to the sea. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, wooden stairs made to enter the water and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view. Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is just like snorkel heaven. □



Prince Bernhard Caribbean Culture Funds looking for projects for 2023

Prince Bernhard Caribbean Culture Funds informed via social media that they opened a registry for cultural projects, funds for talented kids and for the development and care of Aruba for their first round of 2023. The deadline to complete all requirements is April 1st.

The Prince Bernhard Caribbean Culture Funds, better known as PBCCG, is a private and independent foundation with the goal to support different activities and funds within the 6 islands in the Dutch Caribbean—like Aruba, Curacao,

Bonaire, St. Maarten, St. Eustasius and Saba—through the concession of subsidy in order to maintain the culture and nature in these island countries. Their goal is also to help further develop the island and keep stimulating improvement.

Each year, they fund more than 170 private and institutional projects in different areas.

PBCCG is a modern way of cultural sponsorship, supporting especially the conservation and celebration of culture and nature, which can be described as a good cause within a good cause. A fund con-

sists of specific goals for the culture and nature which aligns with the main goal of the organization.

The people who create a fund can do this in both life and death, by creating a fund in their name. The rules of the funds will be determined by PBCCG.

To apply for funding, you need to be able to demonstrate that your project aligns with the specifics of the fund. You would also need to be living in any of the 6 islands in the Dutch Kingdom and be able to development projects in one or more areas.

Those that are not eligible



for funding are the own government of the country, government departments, administrative departments and institutional education, especially if these are involved in political activities.

In terms of the projects themselves, they must be related to any of the 6 focus areas, which include History and Literature, Visual Arts, Theater, Music, Dance, Cultural Education, Cultural Conservation and Preservation of Monuments. These areas must consist of qualitative and sustainable characteristics directed to the public that take part in the local culture.

In June last year, the foundation announced that they have signed an agreement to create a new 'funds under a name' (FON) in Aruba, which will be under their management.

June 2nd of 2022 was a special day for the foundation, as they introduced this new project. The FON project means a fund created with the name of a company or individual. Currently, they have created a fund for the Koeman family, where they will be providing opportunities for another group to receive subsidy, according to hon-

orary board member Alice van Romondt.

Paola Koeman, representative for the Koeman family, indicated that her family considers art and culture on Aruba as an important area to further develop and support. They have received many petitions for cultural initiatives. For this reason, they have decided to lend a helping hand to the area of culture in Aruba in a structural way.

Koeman informed that they have decided to give support to PBCCG, where they will focus on stage art for children, platforms for musicians, dancers and story tellers—especially those groups that usually fade in the back ground.

Head of office for PBCCG, Melanie Slood, expressed that this organization supports art, culture and nature projects on the 6 islands within the Dutch Caribbean. Other organizations, families or individuals who are able could also create a FON, so they can give back to the community.

To make a petition, those interested with a plan for a specific project in Aruba and who check all requirements can visit www.pbc-caribbean.com. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

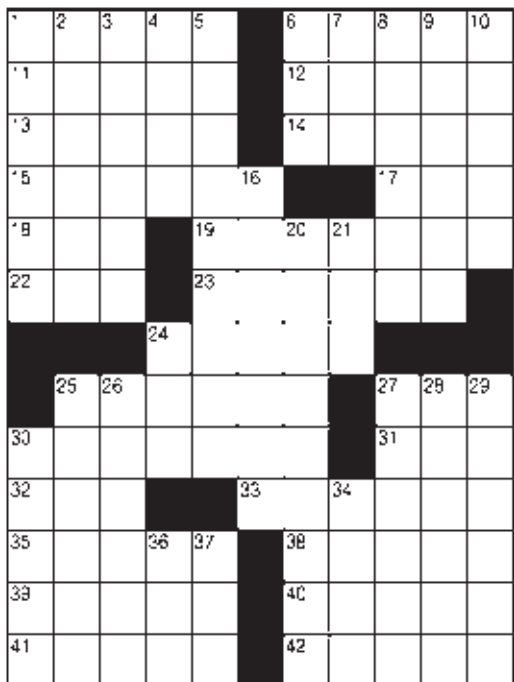
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Yesterday's answer

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25 Ventilate
26 Paper
fastener
27 Layers
28 More
acute
29 Venom-
ous
30 Splinter
groups
34 Poker
price
36 Language
suffix
37 Easy
mark



3-4

AXYDI.BAAXR
IS LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's. X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-4 CRYPTOQUOTE

LZZ MEFKXQRW ALNQ WQDKQC

HQWCJXLCJEXW ES UAJDA CAQ

CKLNQZQK JW FXLUKQ

— PLKCJX TFTQK

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: LIFE IS THE FLOWER FOR WHICH LOVE IS THE HONEY. — VICTOR HUGO

Don't miss these 3 tax credits when you file this year

By ANDY ROSEN of Nerd-Wallet

A tax credit is among the most satisfying benefits you can turn up when preparing your return.

Unlike a deduction, which decreases the income on which you'll be taxed, a tax credit reduces your overall tax due. The result can mean hundreds of dollars knocked off your bill — or added to your refund.

"With a credit, you get a 100% benefit," says Andrew King, vice president of tax policy and research at Goldman Sachs Ayco Personal Financial Management in Cohoes, New York. "It's a full recoupment of taxes you'd otherwise have to pay." Some tax credits apply to a huge swath of the population, while others are specialized to incentivize specific economic activity. Before you file your return, here are some tax credits you may want to review.

1. EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT

The earned income tax credit, or EITC, is one of the most common income tax breaks, designed to help lighten the burden for middle- and lower-income families. For the 2021 tax year, 4 out of 5 filers claimed this tax credit, with an average benefit upward of \$2,000. The total value those credits was approximately \$64 billion, the IRS said. Even better, the EITC is what is known as a "refundable" tax credit. That means if the credit amount is higher than your tax owed, the government will pay you the difference.

DO YOU QUALIFY? As its name suggests, eligibility for the EITC mostly depends on your income, and you



Internal Revenue Service taxes forms are seen on Feb. 13, 2019. Associated Press

have to have worked to receive the credit. For the 2022 tax year, the income limits range from \$16,480 to \$59,187, depending on your filing status.

There are a few other requirements, including: — You can't have more than \$10,300 in investment income. — Everyone on your tax return has to have a valid Social Security number. **2. CHILD TAX CREDIT** If you've used the child tax credit, or CTC, in the past, it's important to remember that this benefit for families with children has undergone some significant changes.

During the pandemic, the government temporarily increased the credit amount, providing thousands of dollars worth of additional relief to some families. But in 2022, the credit reverted to its previous levels. Taxpayers who saw a big refund last year thanks to the credit may be disappointed when they file this time around. Still, the CTC can wipe out a considerable chunk of your tax bill. The benefit can reach \$2,000 per qualifying child, and up to \$1,500 of that is refundable. People with dependents who don't qualify for the full credit can be eligible for a credit up to \$500.

DO YOU QUALIFY?

Families with children under 17 are generally eligible for the child tax credit as long as their kids have valid Social Security numbers. However, the amount you can claim depends on your income. The credit begins to phase out once your adjusted gross income exceeds \$200,000, or \$400,000 for those married filing jointly. At a certain income level, the benefit lapses entirely.

3. AMERICAN OPPORTUNITY CREDIT AND LIFETIME LEARNING CREDIT

The American opportunity credit and lifetime learning credit are two education-focused tax breaks that help people with expenses such as tuition. Both credits have a similar setup, but they are tailored toward different types of costs. The partially refundable American opportunity credit is also more generous: Taxpayers can claim up to \$2,500 per eligible student, including for expenses beyond tuition, such as course materials. With the nonrefundable lifetime learning credit, you can claim a total of \$2,000 per tax return for tuition only, regardless of how many students would be eligible. You can't claim both credits for one student. □

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New crew from U.S., Russia and UAE arrives at space station

By **MARCIA DUNN**

AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla.

(AP) — A new crew arrived at the International Space Station on Friday for a six-month mission, after overcoming trouble with one of the capsule's docking hooks. The SpaceX capsule and its four astronauts had to wait 65 feet (20 meters) from the orbiting lab, as flight controllers in California scrambled to come up with a software fix.

It's the same problem that cropped up shortly after Thursday's liftoff. Although all 12 hooks on the capsule appeared to be fine, the switch for one of them malfunctioned. SpaceX Mission Control urged patience, telling the U.S., Russian and Emirati astronauts they could stay in this holding pattern for up to two hours.

Once new software commands were relayed, the astronauts received the go-ahead to proceed. In the end, the hookup occurred an hour late as the capsule and space station soared 260 miles (420 kilometers) above the coast of Somalia.

"After a brief scenic detour, welcome to the International Space Station," SpaceX Mission Control radioed. NASA officials agreed the delay added to the anticipation.

The new arrivals include United Arab Emirates' Sultan al-Neyadi, the first astronaut from the Arab world who will spend an extended time in space. Al-Neyadi is only the sec-



In this image from NASA TV, the four astronauts including United Arab Emirates' Sultan al-Neyadi, third left gather, during the welcoming ceremony, on the International Space Station, Friday, March 3, 2023.

ond person from the UAE to rocket into orbit.

"I can't be happier than this, seeing old friends in space, gathering as a big family. This is the essence of space exploration," al-Neyadi said upon entering the station. "The UAE is taking a great step toward pushing the boundaries of exploration."

Also flying up in the capsule: NASA's Stephen Bowen, a retired Navy submariner who made three space shuttle flights, and Warren "Woody" Hoburg, a space newbie and former research scientist at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Andrei Fedyayev, a space rookie who's retired from the Russian Air Force.

SpaceX launched the four astronauts for NASA early

Thursday from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Their flight was delayed a few days by a clogged filter in an ignition fluid line.

The UAE sent its first astronaut, Hazzaa al-Mansoori, to the space station in 2019 aboard a Russian rocket. It had been decades since the first Arab launched in 1985 during NASA's shuttle era. The longest spaceflight by any of them was about a week.

A UAE space official, Hamad al-Mansoori, called the station from Dubai to wish el-Nayadi and his crew a safe and successful mission and said it represented "a huge milestone." The space station will be home to 11 people for the next week.

The newcomers will replace two NASA astronauts, a

Japanese astronaut and a Russian cosmonaut who have been on the station since October and will return in their own SpaceX capsule next week. Two other Russians and an American traveled to the station in September on a Russian Soyuz capsule that had to be replaced because of a leak, pushing their mission to a full year. □

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Editor

Caribbean Speed Printers N.V.
Aruba Bank N.V. Acc. #332668
Caribbean Mercantile Bank N.V.
Acc. #23951903
RBC Royal Bank Acc. #1330772

Editors

Pilar Flores
Richard Brooks
Angenette Figueroa

Sales

Mark Gomes
Sulaika Croes

Classifieds

classified@cspnv.com

Distribution and Collection

accounting@bondia.com

Social / Website

Juan Luis Pinto

Weststraat 22
T: 582-7800

E: news@arubatoday.com

W: www.arubatoday.com

@arubatoday



facebook.com/arubatoday/

'Every number is good': Analytics helping speed up baseball

By JIMMY GOLEN
AP Sports Writer

Robot umpires. A strike zone that looks more like a stop sign than a rectangle. Allowing the batter to take off for first base on any pitch, not just a dropped third strike.

With the new pitch clock speeding up the sport, baseball's brain trust already is trying to figure out what might come next in its efforts to make games more exciting and keep them moving along.

And the people running the sport are using the same kind of number-crunching analytics that caused the problem to solve the problem. "This is Phase One. There probably is more coming," Major League Baseball executive vice president Morgan Sword said Friday at the MIT Sloan School Sports Analytics Conference. "But with every single one of these things, we've always tried to (ask): 'Is this a reasonable change that baseball fans are going to support, or are we veering toward something that's not baseball any more?'"

"It's a very subjective skill," Sword said. "There's lots of things that would work that would just irritate people too much to make it worth it." The MIT conference began in 2007 as a small gathering of stat nerds who

believed they had found a better way to measure everything from free agent signings to when to go for it on fourth down. It's now a 2,200-person conclave that fills a downtown convention center with powerful people. Over the years, some of the strategies the statisticians came up with to help a team win also changed the nature of games. In basketball, that meant players attempting 3-pointers at unprecedented rate; in baseball, it led to a game that has gotten longer and more boring.

The average time of a nine-inning game has stretched from 2 hours, 30 minutes in the mid-1950s to 2:46 in 1989 and 3:10 in 2021.

Statistics pioneer Bill James said "it's past time" for those running the national pastime to fight back. And he praised them for using the nerds' own numbers to do it. "In a sense, the game is a war between the front offices, who are trying to figure out a way to make the game slow and boring, and (league officials) who are trying to figure out a way to make it fast and exciting," he said.

"We have some very intelligent adversaries in that war," Sword replied.

Sword said the commissioner's office worked backward from surveys that showed fans want

more action and less time waiting for events to happen. MLB tested dozens of possible solutions in the minor leagues during the past two years and some proved impractical.

"Many of them wound up on the cutting room floor," he said. Future changes would be designed to increase batting averages and cut down on strikeouts that reached a historic high in 2021: The majors are whiffing at a rate higher than batters facing Hall of Famer Sandy Koufax.

"We're rushing to get stuff done that should have been done 30 years ago," James said on the conference's baseball rules panel. "And let's get on with it." Moving fences back would increase batting averages, but it would be expensive and in some ballparks impractical. James mentioned that short home runs down the line used to be a double; that one is also unlikely to be brought back. Changes in equipment and playing surfaces have also been discussed.

Sword said he wants the dropped third strike rule extended to all pitches, but conceded: "Nobody likes that except for me."

James also suggested "adding sides" to the current rectangular strike zone to exclude hard-to-hit pitches at the corners. Most



Home plate umpire Jim Wolf waits as the pitch clock counts down during the first inning of a spring training baseball game between the Milwaukee Brewers and the Los Angeles Dodgers Saturday, Feb. 25, 2023, in Phoenix.

Associated Press

umpires are already adjusting for this, unofficially and perhaps unintentionally.

It would be possible to implement with the automated umpires being used in Triple-A this season. The robo-umps could be in the majors as early as next season, but Sword said "all the strike zones we are testing are rectangular."

The solutions that did stick came in three categories: Rules to speed up the game, most notably a timer that limits the wait between pitches; restrictions on defensive shifting; and bigger bases, to make it slightly easier to steal bases.

"Maybe I would have stolen six bases instead of five," said Raúl Ibáñez, who actually stole 50 bases in a major league career with five teams that stretched

over 19 seasons and is now a baseball VP.

The results after almost a week of spring training: Game times are down about 24 minutes from last year's Grapefruit and Cactus Leagues. Violations in which the umpire awards an automatic ball or strike are being called at a rate of 1.63 per game, compared to 1.7 when it was tested in the minor leagues last year.

Once minor league players adjusted, there was a call about every other game, Sword said. That's happening at spring training, too.

"Players are adapting right now," Ibáñez said. "We're already seeing it in the data. At the major league level, these are the best athletes in the world, and they're the most adaptable." □



Kansas City Chiefs guard Trey Smith (65) celebrates after defeating the Philadelphia Eagles in the NFL Super Bowl 57 football game, Sunday, Feb. 12, 2023, in Glendale, Ariz.

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — While the best college players showcase their skills at this week's annual

scouting combine, the NFL launched a professional development program Friday to provide current and

NFL launches professional development program for players

former players opportunities to prepare for their future after football.

NFL Career Tours gives players exclusive access to major organizations to learn about various career opportunities and network with industry leaders. Sixty men will participate in the program this month to gain behind-the-scenes experience in entertainment, sports business, and the music industry.

The NFL has partnered with the Fifth Season and Hidden Empire film groups, Nike, and Interscope Re-

cords.

The program kicks off next week in Los Angeles with 18 players, including Kansas City Chiefs guard Trey Smith, going to work with Fifth Season and Hidden Empire to gain an all-access look into all facets of the entertainment industry, including acting, casting for roles, directing, financing, producing, and distributing movies.

"The opportunity to better myself outside football from a professional standpoint, I think it's extremely important," Smith said on the AP

Pro Football Podcast.

A group of 16 players will be at Nike World Headquarters in Oregon on March 13-14 for a look at the sports business industry, including product development, marketing, and branding. Sixteen others will go to Interscope Records in Los Angeles on March 20-21. They'll learn all aspects of the music industry, including becoming an artist, managing an artist, promoting the music, operating a record label, and envisioning the money needed to be successful. □

Flood of trades could be reduced to trickle at NHL deadline



St. Louis Blues right wing Kasper Kapanen, left, and San Jose Sharks center Nick Bonino (13) and defenseman Jacob MacDonald compete for possession of the puck during the third period of an NHL hockey game in San Jose, Calif., Thursday, March 2, 2023.

Associated Press

By JOHN WAWROW
AP Hockey Writer

NHL teams were so busy wheeling and dealing in the days ahead of the trade deadline, Arizona general manager Bill Armstrong jokingly wondered if there would be anything left to talk about come the final day on Friday.

"We try to ruin the trade deadline shows, that's the biggest thing in Toronto," Armstrong said with a laugh, referring to the NHL's broadcast partners, who dedicate a majority of their airtime to monitor the movement. "We just like to watch those guys talk about nothing for about three hours on trade deadline day."

Armstrong spoke after continuing the Coyotes youth rebuilding movement by

trading defenseman Jakob Chychrun to the Ottawa Senators two days before the deadline.

With dozens of high-profile names having already switched teams, including goalie Jonathan Quick twice, the NHL's familiar frenzy of last-minute moves slowed to a trickle.

The final day's moves began with Detroit continuing to sell off players, dealing winger Jakub Vrana to St. Louis for a 2025 seventh-round pick and minors player Dylan McLaughlin, while retaining half of Vrana's salary through next season.

In Vrana, the Blues got a third low-risk player in as many weeks after reacquiring depth forward Sammy Blais in the trade that sent Vladimir Tarasenko to the

New York Rangers and plucking underachieving winger Kasper Kapanen off waivers from Pittsburgh.

— The Penguins, meanwhile, brought back Nick Bonino in a three-team deal involving San Jose and Montreal. In trading Bonino to Pittsburgh, the Sharks acquired two draft picks and the rights to Penguins prospect Arvid Henrikson. The Canadiens acquired Sharks defenseman Tony Sund for retaining 50% of Bonino's salary.

— The New Jersey Devils added more forward depth following their deal for winger Timo Meier by getting Curtis Lazar from Vancouver for a 2024 fourth-round pick. "You can see the excitement," Lazar said, recalling the atmosphere in New Jersey dur-

ing a Canucks game last month. "We're definitely no slouch in this mix, so it's motivating."

— The Los Angeles Kings continued their playoff preparations by acquiring tough winger Zack MacEwen from Philadelphia for Brendan Lemieux and a 2024 fifth-round pick.

— Vladislav Namestnikov was on the move again. A day after being dealt by Tampa Bay to San Jose, the 10th-year player was shipped by the Sharks to Winnipeg for a 2025 fourth-round draft pick.

Among the top trade candidates still considered available were three Anaheim Ducks players: defensemen John Klingberg and Dmitry Kulikov, and forward Maxime Comtois.

The two-week stretch lead-

ing into Friday was the busiest for trading in the NHL over the past decade: 43 trades involving 85 players and 55 draft picks, including 12 first-rounders, all since Feb. 17.

That's more than double the trade volume over the same spans since the 2012-13 lockout. Going back to the All-Star break this year, there have been 44 trades with 89 players and 57 draft picks, kicked off by the Rangers getting Tarasenko in a multiplayer deal with St. Louis.

The Rangers also added the biggest fish, getting three-time Stanley Cup champion Patrick Kane from Chicago earlier this week. That answered the rival Islanders' addition of Bo Horvat, the Devils' acquisition of Meier and plenty more movement around the loaded Eastern Conference.

Just as notable were the teams in contention that mostly stood pat. They included the Seattle Kraken, who began the day third in the Pacific Division standings, and Calgary Flames, who are ninth in the Western Conference race and five points out of contention. In the East, the Florida Panthers have been inactive, and the Buffalo Sabres made cursory moves despite being in a four-way tie in ninth, just four points out of contention.

The trade deadline last year featured 32 trades, tying a one-day record set in 2020, involving 51 players and a record-matching 26 draft picks.

Armstrong said it was hard to pin down why GMs have been so proactive ahead of the deadline this year.

"It's a great question because particularly this year, the calls started way earlier. It seems like we've been at this for three hard weeks already," said Armstrong, who collected seven draft picks, including a conditional first-rounder from Ottawa, in making five trades over the past two weeks. "So I do believe that there's a change in when GM's are negotiating. They're not waiting for the final day." □

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